

# jubilee college

STATE PARK



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## THE PARK

Jubilee College, in operation from 1840 to 1862, was one of the earliest educational enterprises in Illinois. The college, founded by Bishop Philander Chase, owned about 4,000 acres of land and contained a theological department, a college proper, a boy's preparatory school and a girl's seminary. In 1933 the college and grounds, then consisting of 96 acres, were presented to the State of Illinois as a permanent memorial by Dr. George A. Zeller.

The scenic area, with rolling grounds and a meandering creek, is near Kickapoo, in Peoria County, about 15 miles northwest of Peoria. Land acquisitions have increased the acreage to 1529.

## HISTORY

Bishop Chase was born in 1775 in Cornish, New Hampshire, the son of English parents. He received an A.B. degree from Dartmouth at age 20. While preparing for the ministry under the direction of ordained clergymen, he spent a year as an itinerant missionary in the wilderness of northern and western New York. After his ordination in 1799, he served as rector of Christ Church in Poughkeepsie, New York, and as head of Poughkeepsie Academy.

In 1805 Bishop Chase was sent to New Orleans where he founded Christ Church, serving as its rector for five years and conducted a successful school. In 1811 he became rector of the Christ Church in Hartford, Connecticut, but his missionary instincts were still strong. Again in 1818 he plunged into the wilderness, this time in Ohio, where he organized Episcopal churches and became the first Bishop of Ohio in 1818. In 1831, seven years after establishing Kenyon College, Bishop Chase retired to a farm in Michigan.

In 1835 Bishop Philander Chase, then sixty years of age, was called to Illinois to assume jurisdiction of the newly formed Episcopal diocese including churches in Jacksonville, Rushville, Peoria and Chicago.

Finding few ministers available to carry on the work here, he journeyed to England to solicit funds for the founding of a seminary, his second appeal to his English friends for money to establish a theological college in America.

After successfully collecting funds for an Episcopal seminary in Illinois, Bishop Chase brought his family from Michigan to Peoria County in 1836. He erected a log cabin which he named "Robin's Nest," because, he said, it was "made of mud and sticks and full of young ones." The site selected for the college was the brow of a bluff overlooking the beautiful valley of the Kickapoo within sight of the Robin's Nest.





Bishop Chase Grave Site

**Cornerstone Laid:** The cornerstone of the Chapel, the first building to be erected was laid April 3, 1839. The Bishop named the institution "Jubilee," in expression of his thankfulness and joy at being permitted to found another college to the glory of God "more than five hundred miles still further toward the setting sun."

The doors of Jubilee were opened in 1840, with the Rev. Samuel Chase, a grandnephew of the Bishop, in charge. According to the charter, Jubilee College consisted of a theological department, a college proper, a classical preparatory school for boys and a seminary for girls. The curriculum was considered excellent for that day, and the instruction was thorough. A few of the students to become prominent in later life were Dr. Thomas Dresser of Springfield; Judge Harvey B. Hurd of Evanston; Adlai Stevenson, who was vice-president during the second Cleveland administration; and James S. Ewing, who served as ambassador to Belgium.

Tuition and board for an entire year was \$100.00 but those who were unable to pay were not turned away. The principal income of the college came from farming the land, a sawmill established two miles down the creek, a flour mill and a herd of 2,000 sheep.

The Bishop's death in 1852 climaxed a series of misfortunes which befell the college. In 1849 much income was lost when the mill was de-

stroyed by fire and the Kickapoo Creek flooded and carried away most of the crops.

**College Closes:** For 7 years after the death of Bishop Chase, the college continued to flourish, but in 1859 it began to decline. With the advent of the Civil War student enrollment dropped and financial assistance from the South was withdrawn. From time to time land was sold to meet obligations, until in the fall of 1862 the burden of indebtedness was so great, the college was closed. The school was reopened three times after the Civil War, but without lasting success.

**The Building:** The chapel is constructed of hewn native stone, with Gothic windows and a slender spire. The transepts and apse, together with a long school room, form a pattern of a cross. Several years after the completion of the chapel, used not only by the college but by the parish as well, a dormitory was added, joining the school room at right angles.

In the dormitory a greater part of the space, upstairs and down, was divided into small compartments, each containing a double-decked bed. In the front room on the ground floor was the library. The north end of the wing was the post office, where Bishop Chase also served as postmaster.

The college is currently undergoing exterior and interior repairs to restore its original appearance.



## FACILITIES

**Picnicking:** A large picnic area with a pavilion is available and picnic tables and stoves are provided. No cooking may be done except on the camp or park stoves. Water and flush toilets are available.

**Hiking:** There are no marked trails, but those who enjoy hiking will find several trails through wooded areas. The Rock Island Trail is nearby and is managed from Jubilee College State Park.

**Camping:** Tent and trailer camping areas are available with a trailer disposal and some electricity. All campers must obtain a permit from the park ranger. Group camping is available; groups of over 25 persons must have advance permission to enter the park.

**Fishing:** Kickapoo Creek runs along the park and anglers will find a variety of fish including largemouth bass, bluegill, sunfish, channel catfish and carp.

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

Admittance will not be granted groups of 25 or more persons to any state park or conservation area unless permission from the park ranger has been secured to use the facilities. It is also required that groups of minors have adequate supervision and that at least one responsible adult accompany each group not exceeding 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state parks and memorials are within easy access of every part of the state. Lodges, cabins and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state parks are open the year round. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of park roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to park facilities is by foot only.

For more details contact Park Ranger, R. R. 2, Box 72, Brimfield, Illinois 61517, phone 309/243-7683. For information on other Illinois sites, write the Department of Conservation, Information/Education Division, State Office Building, Springfield, 62706.

